Kennedy, Fannie

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Sept. 17, 1981
(dated)

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(dated) September 17, 1981

Accepted for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project

by

(Project Director) (Dated)

Oakland Neighborhood History Project

Interview with Fannie Kennedy
Date of Interview: September 17, 1981; Alameda, California
Interviewer: Sally Thomas
Transcriber: Sally Thomas
Begin Tape 1, Side 1

Notes and Partial Transcription

0-5 minutes	0-50 counter

Fannie born October 31, 1905 in New York, in the Bronx. Parents from Austria, Germany. Moved to England. Oldest brother born in London. Her parents were married in London. Came to the U.S. for better opportunities. From New York they went to Milwaukee. Another brother born in Milwaukee. From there they went to Colorado Springs because her mother was not well. She had treatment at a sanitarium there. When she was better they came to Oakland — in 1912. Father had relatives in Oakland, cousins.

"My dad was never very communicative about his background. He was an only child and left home when he was quite young, and branched out for himself."

First settled on Center Street.
Then went to Cole School.
Then to 10th and Chestnut.
Then to 8th and Linden. Family stayed there until her father passed away in 1941. Mother moved to Fruitvale — 29th Avenue, by Montgomery Wards. She bought a house there.

When Fannie was married she moved to an apartment by the lake, then moved to East Oakland on Morcam Avenue,

opposite to Mills College. They lived there until 1965. Then moved to Malcolm Avenue near the Dunsmuir House. They lived there for about 10 years until her husband passed away in 1974.

5-10 minutes | 50-100 counter

In 1975 moved. Family moved together to Alameda — her 2 sisters and 2 sisters-in-law. She lives with one of her sisters and his husband. Another sister lives 3 houses down from them. Her 2 sisters-in-law live next door.

" There are 3 of us that are widowed, so we felt it was better to be closer together."

" Oakland had gone downhill so we decided that we wanted to get out of Oakland."

Describes how housing changed during the war to accomodate the workers, the blacks, who were working in the shipyards.

" The area just changed completely. ("Completely" emphasized). I don't think you'd find any of the oldtimers anymore. And it's too bad because when we were kids growing up that was a nice area. We had some Negroes, but there wasn't the feeling there is now. As kids we never thought about color. The schools were just like an international settlement, actually. You had every nationality under the sun. The area that we lived in there were a lot of Italians, a lot of Irish, and as far as religion or color, I don't think that anybody gave it much thought. All this seemed to develop after the war. I think a lot of people resented the fact that the Negroes had come in and were getting

the jobs. Of course I worked in West Oakland all my life. To me color and religion just didn't even enter my mind. We played with little Negro kids when we were growing up. When we lived at 12th and Center there were lots of little Negro families down there. Never gave it a thought. Of course now it's so different."

The drastic change came in 1943. The blacks started pouring in.

Cole School burnt down, so Market Street Junior High School was organized to accomodate students from Cole School. That was housed in what used to be the vocational high school.

10-15 minutes | 100-155 counter

This new school needed a principal and a secretary in a hurry, so she was hired. She had just graduated from High School in 1923.

"I was green as they come. I was only a little over seventeen then myself."

The new principal had been a principal in Alameda, was principal of Haight (?) Elementary in Alameda. His name was George Furbush. Cole School had burnt over the New Years weekend. The name was soon changed from Market Street Junior High to Lowell Junior High. It was an old building, eventually condemned. Location was at 12th and Market. A new building was constructed at 14th and Myrtle. They moved into that in 1927 or 1928. She worked there until about 1955. In the meantime they had torn down what was McClymonds High School because of earthquake problems. The new McClymonds

building was ready in 1955. When McClymonds was being torn down the students attended school at Lowell— it was a rat race for a couple of years. Administration, including the principal, James Hensley was then transfered. The old Lowell building was torn down a few years ago due to earthquake hazards. They replaced the beautiful old building with one that looked like a factory. Fannie was at McClymonds until she retired in 1974. (The two schools had consolodated in 1936.) The principals had changed quite often while Fannie was there.

"When we went into the new McClymonds then, Oakland, the Negro population had changed, the percentage had changed. But from the time we moved over there until I left in '74 we were almost 99% black. When I retired I don't think there were two white youngsters in the school. West Oakland had become completely inhabited by Negro people. And that's actually when so much of the area became so poorly kept. The housing went down — people didn't have the money, I guess."

15-20 minutes | 155-215 counter

About 10 years ago she and her husband went driving around in Oakland, (West Oakland — he had lived there, too) and Fannie couldn't even find her street. When she lived at 8th and Linden the old street car went right by her house. Father had business at the 10th Street Market, where Swan's is now. He had a bakery and a notion stand. Fannie used to help him in the bakery after school and on Saturdays. All of the kids worked, helped the family. Her brothers all sold papers. There were 6 children in her family. There were originally 8, but 2 were (lost/died). So there were 3 boys & 3 girls.

Maiden name was Nassau. She went to the old Oakland High at 12th and Jefferson, near the park at 10th and Jefferson, Chabot Center. They didn't have an auditorium at Oakland High, so they used the auditorium at the Chabot Center [The old brick building was torn down in 1928], then it moved to its new location at Park Blvd. She and her brothe Harry and he siste Evelyn and brother Ted all graduated from Oakland High. Harry and Fannie graduated from the old building, and Evelyn and Ted graduated from the new building. Her younger siste Margaret refused to go to Oakland High so she went to Oakland Tech, at 45th and Broadway. She graduated from Tech in 1938.

WRONG

Her father, before he became a baker, worked for a firm in San Francisco, a wholesale house. He worked there for years until he decided to go into business for himself.

He didn't do his own baking — he dealt with wholesale people. Her mother, though, used to bake the doughnuts. They cooked them at the bakery. The wholesale house her father worked at before carried home furnishings, linens and household items.

20-25 minutes | 215-275 counter

"It used to be a treat once-in-a-while, my mother would go over to buy things for our home use, our own personal use — you had to have a card to get in. Once-in-a-while she'd take one of us with her. It was so much fun to go through the place. It was huge."

Her father owned the bakery and the notions stand. Her brother Harry, after he left high school, ran the notions stand. The bakery was at one end of the market, and the notions

stand at the other. In those days the stands were individually owned. Her brother Harry ran the notions stand for a long time. Her brother Ted used to help him. His father closed the bakery when he became ill in the late '30s. In those days the market was open every day, including Saturdays, until, during the weekdays, 6 o'clock, on Saturday til 9:00.

"You really worked hard, but we used to have a good time down there. So many like myself — I was in high school and used to help my dad after school. All the young Italian kids had to help their folks in the vegetable stands and delicatessens. I had a very good little friend — her folks ran a delicatessen — and she went to Oakland Tech. We became very good friends just because my dad's bakery area was across from her folks. She was actually one of my bridesmaids when I got married. Their name was Jensen — Chris and Lena Jensen. They were Danish. My little friends name was Claire. She had a sister Erma. Both the girls used to work in the market when they were in school. And of course, after they graduated, just like myself, they went to work someplace else."

Claire worked at Goodrich Tire Company in S.F. First husband died, she remarried 8 years later and moved to Modesto. Has lost track of her since she moved

25-30 minutes | 275-340 counter

Other people in the market — a family named Levitz, who had an egg and butter stand. Al went to Oakland High — he was a star basketball player, he has passed away, but his wife is still living, working part time at Liberty House in Oakland. Then there was Levy,

Gus Levy, who ran the Golden State butter and egg place. His sister was a teacher in Oakland.
Then there was a family named Ramponi who ran a delicatessen, with Italian coldmeats and cheese. The daughte is living in Emeryville now. She's a good friend of one of Fannie's sisters. She's lost track of most of them. Claire's about the only one she keeps track of by writing. The Ramponi's daughte is married w/ name of Kaufmann.
There was a Peralta family who had a big watermelon and potato place.
Speaks of beautiful old homes in West Oakland.

"To go back into when we were living on 8th and Linden, up on 10th and Linden and 10th and Chestnut, there used to be some of these beautiful large homes. In fact I can remember as a kid coming from school they used to have concrete walls, and then they'd have the bars on the fence, we kids would get up on that wall so we could peek over and see the houses — beautiful homes! They were some really estates down there, especially when we first came to Oakland."

Moved to 8th and Linden in 1920, and the old houses were still standing. The houses were built on large pieces of estate, and set back. "They radiated wealth." A lot of the people in Piedmont date back to the wealthy in West Oakland.
Speaks of her old Victorian home.

"All that fancy scroll work on the outside, and inside, I remember, our house had about; oh I'm sure, ... I've forgotten exactly, but I used to have to dust

the stairways every Saturday night when I was home. From the first hall up to the second hall. [redacted] There must have been 20, or 24 steps."

Thomas: Where did your family worship?

Kennedy: My family didn't follow any faith. My mother was Jewish, and my dad was, too. But my father just wasn't one who believed very much in his faith, and just didn't permit us kids to go. We started — we used to go to the old synagogue that was down at 9th and Castro. I don't know if it's still standing there or not. It was one of the orthodox at the time. My mother tried to follow her faith as best as she could. But we kids never went. It's too bad because I think you lose something when you don't. Mamma used to feel very badly about it, but none of us ever went back into it. If it isn't instilled in you when you're real young I don't think you carry through. But my mother followed her faith as best she could. But it was difficult because my dad wouldn't observe the customs, and naturally the old orthodox are so much more rigid about so many things. You have your reformed, now — they're much freer in their thinking. I think if it had been a reform group my dad wouldn't have been quite so opposed to it."

30-35 minutes | 340-410 counter

Thomas: Do you think it was due to an "American" influence?

Kennedy: Could be, I don't know what it was, really. My dad never talked about his family very much. I don't know whether his training at home was too rigid or what. He just didn't have any faith in it and just didn't want us kids involved, and we weren't.

Thomas: But you say your mother followed it as closely as she could?

Kennedy: The best she could, all the little customs. I know she used to light her candles on Friday night and my dad told her he thought she was foolish, but she went right on doing what she wanted to do. I think that's the way it should be. She would go to Temple on Friday nights lots of times. One of us would either, my brothers would either take her or after I had a boyfriend we'd drive her over and pick her up. She went, and she did what she wanted.

Thomas: Did you identify yourself as being Jewish? Did that have any impact?

Kennedy: I just always said, "I follow no faith." Because that's really the truth. I have a friend that's been trying to get me interested in the Temple over here, they have a nice new temple, but I just feel hypocritical about going into it at this late date. In fact I feel like I'm rather ignorant about the whole religion, the customs. I just don't have the courage to go ahead and get started.

Thomas: Do you remember there being many Jewish people in Oakland when you were growing up?

Kennedy: Oh yes, many. And at the market there were a lot of Jewish people that had the businesses, which is typical. They've always had stores and shops. That's been part of their background, I think.

Thomas: What was the relationship between the 10th Street Market and the other downtown area?

Kennedy: Down at 6th and Washington they had what they call the 6th Street Market. And their prices were cheaper than the 10th Street. But we always felt the 10th Street was a much nicer market. But I think that still exists down there. I have been down to that area for years. The only place that is still standing and is a landmark is that Ratto's Market.

Thomas: Do you remember ever shopping there?

Kennedy: Oh yes, many times. We'd go down and get the Italian meats. We just loved the Italian cuts. They're still standing.

35-40 minutes | 410-500 counter

Thomas: Did your mother buy Kosher food?

Kennedy: She would try. She used to go to a kosher butcher, especially — the meat. And, of course, she would never fix any pork in the house. Well... I shouldn't say never because we eventually trained her to buy ham, sliced ham to fry with ham and eggs. We broke her down because it was the things we liked. She did, too. But for many years when we were little she'd never have any pork at home. But as we grew older, and my dad wanted this and wanted that, why, she'd weaken. There was a Jewish delicatessen on 7th and Filbert, I think. It was either Filbert or Linden. We used to go there and shop a great deal. I remember I used to go with my mother. They carried all the kosher foods. She tried to carry the whole thing through, but as we kids were growing up, naturally we changed a lot of her habits because our friends, a lot of them were not Jewish. We met kids at school, and we became friendly with them, and we brought them into the home. She accepted them. My mom was really very open-minded. I often think, the poor little thing, she didn't have much of a chance with all we kids and my dad. (laughter) But she was happy in her way. She believed in her religion, and it was too bad that my dad couldn't go along with her on it, but he just couldn't see it. But there were a lot of people that way, now.

I think church attendance has dropped off, especially young people.

Thomas: Did you have many Jewish friends?

Kennedy: Yes, quite a few. There was the Milnetsky family, they lived on Castro and 5th. This friend of mine, her folks ran a kosher restaurant for years.

Thomas: What was the name of it?

Kennedy: They just called it Milnetskis. She and I were very good friends at school. She was a bridesmaid when I was married, too. She went to Oakland High and became a teacher. She had four sisters and a brother. The brother lives in Reno, has for years and years. They changed their name to Milner

Thomas: When did they change their name.

Kennedy: I guess when, even before he moved to Reno. That goes back in the '20s.

Thomas: In the '20s anti-semitism was much more apparent than it had ever been previous to that in Oakland.

Kennedy: Well, of course, we always knew it existed. As I say, my friends were mixed. That's the way it was at school. You had everybody: the little Catholic youngsters, the Italians, the Irish, and then you had your little Jewish friends. We really didn't give it any thought.

Thomas: You say you were aware of anti-semitism. In what way?

Kennedy: Remarks that people would make. Very unkind. There were lots of unkind things said. Of course there were a lot of youngsters who grew up in homes where this sentiment was expressed. If they got into an argument with you they called

you some names that you didn't believe in or approve of. It was too bad. If parents talk that way about a group of people, kids pick it up, and grow up with that — instilled in them. We just mixed with everybody. I don't remember calling anybody a name because I never was that way. But I've heard it done, especially among the boys when they get in a fight. But you always have that, I'm afraid.

Thomas: You were about to tell me about the Jewish who were running stores in downtown Oakland.

Kennedy: The shoe stores and clothing stores have always been run by people of the Jewish faith. I don't know why but it seems to be their business. So much of the business centered between 10th and Washington and 14th and Washington. City Hall was at 14th and Washington. We had [redacted] Washington market which was the market.* It was one of the finest markets in the city because the very wealthy used to come there and buy.

40-45 minutes | 500-590

* That was just above 12th and Washington.

Thomas: How long was it considered the finest.

Kennedy: Well, again, after the war is when it started to change. It was still going strong during the war years. I used to meet my husband, still in the service ... I used to meet my mother when I was working — when I first went to work with the school department, we used to have to work Saturdays until noon, that's what they called the classified staff, clerical group — so I'd always meet Mamma, and we'd go to Washington Market very often for lunch because they had marvelous sandwiches, and they had the best shrimp

cocktail you could ever find. (laughte) We used to love to go down there, and we'd go shopping, and then we'd go back and have a shrimp cocktail in the afternoon before we'd go home.

Thomas: What type of shopping did you do there?

Kennedy: There was what used to be called Hales, a big department store. Later it became Whithorn and Swan. That was at 11th and 10th, Washington and Clay. It took a big block. That was one of the nicest department stores in Oakland at the time. Liberty House used to be Kahns. Capwell's used to be known as Capwell, Sullivan, and Furths (?) They were on 14th and Clay. Across the street from them used to be Taft and Pinnoyer. That was a very exclusive department store. Right across the street from them was Jackson's Furniture Store at 14th and Clay — that went to 13th and Clay. It took in that whole block. That was a big shopping area for years. Taft and Pinnoyer closed down, closed out completely. Capwell's built their new building in 1929 up on 20th and Broadway. Then all the businesses slowly began to move. And Penny's had a store at 11th and Washington. For years and years they had a store in downtown Oakland. Now they don't have one. They have one out at Eastmont Mall, on 73rd and MacArthur. They're all over now. After the war everything began to move up. Moneyback Smith (?) used to be at 12th and Washington. Now they're up at 14th and Broadway. Grodins used to be on 12th near Broadway. They are way up by the Kaiser Center now. They all left the lower part of Oakland,

as we call it, and went on into the newer part. Of what is below 14th is considered hill, although with the new Civic Center coming up I don't know what is going to happen down there. But those two old markets are still there. I can remember when we went shopping we never walked beyond 14th or 15th and Broadway. Everything was done from that point down. But of course everything is done now from 15th and Broadway up. And even now in Downtown Oakland, I don't go in very often, but on Saturday, my goodness, you could shoot a cannon down Broadway. Once upon a time when you'd go shopping on a Saturday, you could hardly get through, there'd be such a crowd on the sidewalk. But that doesn't happen anymore because of all these new malls in the suburbs. People just don't come in. That's why I'm wondering with all this trend toward improving growth in Oakland, which is good, I'm just wondering how it's gonna work. Where are all the people going to come from? People still like the suburbs, mostly because of parking. Downtown if you park your hour or two is gone so fast, next thing you know you have a ticket. And people hate that."

45-47 minutes | 590-640 counter

Most food shopping was done at the [redacted] market because they worked there as well. Her mother did a great deal of shopping at a Jewish delicatessen on 7th Street, and some was done at the corner grocery.

Begin Side 2

0-5 minutes | 0-50 counter

Southern Pacific train had a depot on 7th Street between Market and Myrtle. That's where they got their train to go to S.F. "That was a big thrill." Train took them to

the Mole, then took ferryboat. "The ferryboat rides were always just great, just great." Her husband worked in S.F. when they were first married. Talking about the ferryboat rides and commuting

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"The fellows used to love to eat, it was a regular tradition to be sure and have cornbeef hash. They used to have the best cornbeef hash on the boats going to San Francisco. The fellows used to just love it. They had a regular dining area, counter space of course. They served breakfast, lunch, or whatever you wanted."

Did a lot of hiking in Marin County when she was a teenager. So they caught the trains on Sunday morning, the first train in the morning, either 6 o'clock or 5:30, from the ferry building they took a boat to Sausalito, from Sausalito they took a train to Mill Valley. From Mill Valley they started their hike into Muir woods.
Key route had a train on 12th Street, so if they missed the S.P they'd catch the key route. But they preferred the S.P. because it was too far to run from 8th to 12th. They hiked almost every other weekend. Sometimes they went to the Chabot Observatory Area in Oakland. In those days it was called Leona Heights. But Muir Woods was prettier. Fannie and her friends and family went outside of West Oakland quite frequently, but not too much into other neighborhoods. Walked to school. Went to the old movie house on 7th and Market — the "Marquis". It was a treat to go every Saturday night to watch the serials. That was the extent of entertainment because there wasn't that much money. After all, there were six kids to raise in her family.
Most entertainment was in school. Fannie played in the

orchestra. There were hiking clubs at school, too. Outings went to Lake Merritt's park, a band concert on Sunday. 4th of July was a big occasion at the Lake — picnicked with supper, spread out blankets.
"You had to make your own entertainment in those days."

5-10 minutes | 50-100 counter

They listened to radio, but with eight people in the house it was difficult.
Brothers were crazy about sports. Played mostly baseball. Played baseball at the deFremery Park. Football wasn't as big. Kids played baseball in the streets, too. Fannie was never athletic because her dad wouldn't let her stay after school to play. She had to help him at the market. She was the oldest of the girls, next to oldest in the family.

Kennedy: "I either had to go home and take care of the kids while my mother went to the shop, or I want to the shop. So I was never allowed to stay after school, so I never became interested in sports.

Thomas: But you were in the orchestra. Was that an after school event?

Kennedy: Yes, but when I had that to do my dad made arrangements because he always wanted us to be in that. He never approved of sports. That's what happened to my oldest brother. He played the violin, and my father didn't want him playing baseball because of his hands. But Jack was just crazy about baseball. I think if my dad hadn't balked him, he might have been a good professional ball player. But my father didn't like athletics. But music . . . We all took music at school. My dad never played any musical instrument but he

always loved music. We had the old type of phonograph, the victrola, and he had a lot of the opera-etic (?) records — real old records. He loved music, but he never played himself.

Thomas: Did any of the neighbors get togethe for an evening of music?

Kennedy: No, not too much.

Thomas: What did the neighbors do together?

Kennedy: Actually, I don't remembe anything, except I had to babysit. I babysat for a lot of my neighbors. In fact they'd bring their kids over to my mother's house because we had 3 small ones I used to watch if Mamma wasn't home. So to take two or three more from the block didn't make any difference. So I did a lot of babysitting. People were friendly. If you needed help they were there. But I don't remembe a lot of visiting. You'd talk over the fence. I remember as a young girl there was a "Maiden Lady", as we used to call her, living two or three doors down from us. She was very very good to me. I never should have lost track of her, but I did after I moved away.

Thomas: What do you mean by "maiden lady"?

Kennedy: Unmarried. We used to call them "maiden ladies"! She used to have me come over and sometimes have lunch. Of all the neighbors she was very very warm. But that's all she had. She was by herself all the time.

Thomas: What was her name?

Kennedy: Larck. She lived on Chestnut, 10th and Chestnut. She was about two or three doors down

from us. But I remember how she used to always say, "It's such a shame Fannie that you have to take care of the kids." (laughter) But that was just part of growing up in those days. The oldest in the family of girls, especially, had that to do.

Thomas: What about your other sisters?

Kennedy: My sister Evelyn did a lot at home, too. But my youngest sister didn't have that kind of responsibility because by that time, financially, things were much better, and there were no other youngsters under her. So she did pretty much what she wanted."

10-15 minutes | 100-156 counter

But Evelyn helped a lot. Especially after Fannie married, she helped out at the market. Margaret helped at the market a little bit, but she hated it.

Kennedy: "But she was the youngest, so she got away with murder."

Thomas: Did any of your children go on to college?

Kennedy: No. I wanted to, but my dad couldn't put me through. I wanted to go to San Francisco State. They had a two-year course for a kindergarten credential at that time. Now it's at least four years. This friend of mine, Milnetski, she went over to San Francisco State, and she became a teacher. Her folks put her through though. My dad just couldn't afford to put me through. I thought, "I'll work a couple of years, then I'll go." But I got so interested in my job I didn't want to give it up.

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worked as principal's secretary.

social clubs, family belonged to a couple of lodges — the Independent Order of Foresters, a fraternal and insurance club.

And they belonged to the Moose. Both clubs are still in existence. The Moose was a mostly social group. The Moose is a nation-wide organization. They have Mooseheart in Aurora, Illinois, an orphanage home for children of members. Dues help to support that.

The Independent Order of Foresters is national and Canadian. They have good insurance plans, plus fraternal and social activities. Fannie was active in both of those groups. Restriction: no blacks, but anybody else could belong. They still don't admit blacks.

There were quite a few Japanese youngsters attending Lowell, but not much mixing.

[maybe Kajawara]

One family, Tajawara (?), the girl, kept in touch with Fannie for years and years.

15-20 minutes | 155-215 counter

There were Chinese in the area, too. They lived mostly on the other side of Broadway — Franklin, Webster, Harrison.

Never aware of anti-Chinese sentiment. Felt very badly when the Japanese were taken away during the war.

"That was a real difficult time for so many of those youngsters that were in school because many of them ~~were~~ I'm sure, were just as loyal to the United States as we were. But it was just the sentiment of the time. People were hysterical. One reason I was very much aware of it was we had a Japanese gardener. This goes way back to 1939, '40, '41. I can't remember this name. But I had this one for four or five years. One day he rang my door when he came to cut our lawn and take care of our yard — poor man — he was in tears. They

were moving him out. Just over night. I don't know how many days they had to get packed. I felt so badly because we never thought of him as anything but a man. I didn't think of him as a "Jap" or Italian, or anything. I always felt it was wrong. Because if they were going to do that they should have taken the Germans, the Italians. . . .

I don't think that compensating them with cash is the answer. To me you don't buy that, you can't improve a hurt by paying for it. I don't think. I think they should have thought twice before they did what they did. But people get hysterical. Because their was a lot of "anti" feeling, and German, too. I know even in World War I, when I was just a little kid, we used to speak German at home. My mother and dad spoke German at home. We kids all spoke German. I can remember the kids calling us names, because they knew we spoke German. That's one reason we stopped speaking German. My father wouldn't talk to us if we didn't speak in German. Kids would call us "Huns" that was an expression they used an awful lot in World War I. And here we had been living here since 1912. But this is the hysteria that goes with war. They hate you, and when it's over they forget what they've done, and in the meantime the hurt is there.

The children spoke and wrote German. But didn't identify with the other Germans in the area. Mother and father were always busy with home and work.

20-25 minutes | 215-275 counter

Family didn't do too much socializing.

"When we moved to Oakland and lived down at 10th and Center I can remember one Christmas there was a black family that lived across the street from us. Their name was White. My brother Harry took very ill during a Christmas time. He went into double pneumonia as a little boy. My poor mother was frantic. They had to take him to the hospital. There was myself and my brother Jack, and Harry of course was bedridden, and Evelyn was a small baby. That woman, Mrs. White, came over and told my mother to go to the hospital with Harry. She took all three of us over to her home and kept us, and took care of us, and put us to bed — we were all little — until Mamma got back from the hospital. Whenever she had to go Mrs. White would take all the kids across the street, and take care of us and feed us. This is why I don't think we ever felt anything.

Thomas: Where was your father?

Kennedy: He of course was working. We didn't have a car, in fact we didn't have a car until we were living at 8th and Linden. A Wickenbacker (?) - I remember, was my dad's first car. But my dad was busy, and at that time he was working in San Francisco and wasn't home. So Mamma was pretty much on her own. But this Mrs. White, I'll never forget. Her husband was a railroad porter. She had two boys, I think. That woman was so good to us. I think that

was the beginning of our having a lot of love for them. We never thought of people that were black as anything but a friend.

Thomas: Do you remember the other people on that street at the time?

Kennedy: There were, but she was the only one as I remember. I was very, very young. The only thing I remember is that she took care of us. . . . When we moved up to 10th and Chestnut then we had neighbors: the Presleys, the Gustavsons, Lash — they were right around us. There were a few others that lived on 7th. Their backyards faced our backyards.

Doesn't remember seeing many East European Jews, except in the Synagogue. Stayed home most of the time.

"We weren't allowed to run around very much. My dad was a very strict disciplinarian. You did what you were told — or else. I was always kept very busy at home as a young girl. I'd take care of the kids, cook, and clean, go to school. So there was very little running around. Not much socializing. We did very little going back and forth to a girlfriend's house. In fact, this Claire that I mentioned, the first time she invited me to come and stay overnight at their home, my father was against it. He wouldn't let me go. So her father came to talk to my dad because he couldn't understand why — we were only kids in high school. But my dad didn't believe in that. Mr. Johnson (?Jorgensen?) talked a Dutch leg off of him, and he finally agreed.

. . . Mamma would have done it, but she didn't have the final say. With the old European custom, the man is the boss. I used to tell Mamma, "It's not going to be that way in my life!" (laughter)

Thomas: What did she think about the changes?

Kennedy: It used to upset her sometimes. She'd get very disturbed, like when my husband would pitch in and help me at home. She thought that was terrible. At first. But when we went down to her place, and he'd help Mamma with dishes, she got so she loved it. But this was her generation, the way they were brought up in Europe. The women did exactly what the men said. And that was all brought over here. I can remember this little Italian friend that I mentioned, a friend of my sisters, her dad was very strict with he mothe — same way. So it's an old custom from Europe. But I don't think it's that way now. There's a lot more freedom now for women.

Thomas: Your married name is Kennedy. Was your husband Irish?

25-30 minutes | 275-340 counter

Kennedy: Uh huh. Irish and Scotch.

Thomas: Was he Catholic?

Kennedy: He was, but he didn't follow his faith. He went to parochial school as a boy.

Thomas: Did he grow up in West Oakland?

Kennedy: Yeah. He lived on Myrtle and 12th. In fact he lived next door to a very lovely home, people by the name of Minchen. They were quite well-to-do. They had a beautiful home on the corner of 12th and Myrtle. There were two children, Jack, and, I've forgotten the sister's name.

My husband's mother had a big home, an old home, right next door. She was a widow, and she took in boarders. She had three boys. One son was married when I met my husband.

Thomas: From which side of the family did the Irish come?

Kennedy: On his mother's side. She was born in Iowa. His father was killed in an accident when Don was very young. His mother was widowed with three young boys to take care of. So they went to work early, too. He lived just a few blocks from me.

Thomas: Was there any problem of you marrying a Catholic?

Kennedy: My mother wasn't happy about it in the beginning, but she became very fond of him. So she was very sweet about the whole thing. It bothered her, I think, because none of us married into the Jewish faith. But, like I say, we didn't mix with enough of them to make it important to us. When I look back I can see that she was probably hurt, but she accepted each one of the in-laws with open arms. And she was very, very fond of my husband. He was so good to her.

Thomas: Were you aware of some Jews who were clannish, who stuck together?

Kennedy: Not particularly. This little Milnetski gal that I knew, her people were very Orthodox. She went to temple, and I used to go with her, sometimes. And sometimes I would go with my mother. We never thought about it very much, I guess, because religion wasn't made that important at home, except that my mother did try to follow her faith. But my dad talked against it so much, in fact all religions. He was definitely an atheist, I guess you'd call him.

Kennedy, cont: But we all respected what my mother did. My oldest brother used to tease her sometimes about some of the things she did, a couple of the customs, but nobody ever interfered. You wouldn't dare. . . . . We didn't mix with our own group. Maybe we should have, and maybe we would have stayed within the faith. But when you get out and mix with all these different nationalities and religions you grow away from it. If my dad and mother had followed it, maybe then we would have followed, too. But, like I say, my dad opposed it so much that we just shrugged our shoulders. If Mamma asked you to go with her, we went. In fact my husband was brought up in the Catholic Church, but yet he'd go to temple with me and my mother, take my ~~mother~~ mother.

Thomas: How did his parents feel about it?

Kennedy: She always said she didn't care who he married as long as it was somebody who was worthwhile. She was a real Irish person — had a wonderful temperament. But she went to church faithfully. Don would take her every Sunday. And she'd go sometimes during the week to mass. But they both accepted it just beautifully. I think in the kind of living you do nowadays you almost have to learn to do that. You don't really have that much of an orthodox following anymore. Most of them are reformed now in the Jewish faith. And of course in the Catholic Church they admit that the young people are drifting away. And they're changing their whole theory, too.

Religion didn't play that big a part in our life, and I think it's too bad. I think you miss something, I really do."

30-35 minutes | 340-410 counter

Discusses biggest change in the school as being the complete change in black population. Administration completely white (or almost) before the war — it changed afterwards. Manner of dress in teaching staff changed, too. Wasn't enough respect shown to the administrators. Doesn't remember much about the Okies and the Arkies who came from the South during the war. Not many came to the school Fannie worked at. She thinks they settled more in the East Oakland area, around E. 14th. Those whites:

Kennedy: Very poor, very poor. So many had no background training in school, at all. This was one of the sad things about the Negroes, too, is that so many of those youngsters had never gone to regular school. I think this had a great deal to do with pulling down standards that were required, because so many of them that came out of the Deep South had so little training. It used to bother me a great deal because some of those youngsters, when they allowed them to graduate . . . It was none of my business, I had no right to even express myself, but it bothered me because I knew some of them couldn't read, they could barely write their name. You don't graduate them from high school when they're like that. At least that was the way I felt.

Kennedy, cont: "But they had to be pushed through. They were eighteen. They had to get out."

Getting out of school the blacks couldn't get jobs. A lot did manual labor. In the '60s they began to push the blacks to go on to college. A lot went on — but they weren't college material. So there were a lot of drop-outs. A lot of students at McClymonds were good in athletics so they got into college on an athletic basis. Frank Robinson is a good example, he is manager of the Expos. He was a student at McClymonds when Fannie was there. "He certainly was not a student."

35-40 minutes | 410 - 500 counter

The stress on athletic ability bothered Fannie a lot. Nick Petris was the type of student they had for a long time — he was good. They were a marvelous group back then, real college material. Some blacks have done alright — there are quite a few teaching now, and into administration.

"There was so much pressure on get them into college, get them into college. They were pushing a lot of them that would have been better off in a vocational school. Then they could have gone on, and gone to work, some type of bussiness where they could have made a decent living. But so many were on welfare."

"I don't know what it's like now, cuz I've been away too long, and I haven't been down and around the school people at all, but for such a long time they'd pass the youngsters just so they could make the team."

Thomas: How did you feel about the different neighborhoods? What was your conception of the different neighborhoods?

Kennedy: Well, you know, we really didn't give it much thought. We moved to Oakland when we were little, and we went through school in Oakland, and we accepted what we had down there. We didn't get away from that area very much because my dad had this one relative in Oakland — he lived in a little better area than we did, on the other side of the lake. It always appealed to me as being so much nicer than what we were in, but, really, our neighborhoods were nice. They were well-kept, and the houses were well-kept, and we didn't really think about it. Except when I got married, well, naturally we wanted to get out of the area that we'd grown up in."

Mother moved into Fruitvale area. Wanted to be close to transportation, and not too far from shopping because she didn't drive, and she was getting old. She lived a block above E. 14th, on 29th Avenue, near Montgomery Wards. Fannie stopped to visit her mother almost every night.

40-45 minutes | 500-590 counter

Next to her mother on one side was a Mexican family, got to be very good friends. On the other side was an Irish lady. The Irish woman's name was Sharp. (She's passed away.) The other was Cecelia Corenza (?), who has moved to San Jose now. She lived there with her husband, two boys, and a girl.

The old house was torn down for war housing.

Her mother enjoyed Mrs. Sharp very much — they had more in common. Mrs. Corenza had the young children. Fannie's sister Margaret stayed in that

house after her mother died. Margaret married and lived there. When Margaret's husband came back afte the war and they had their son, Mrs. Corenza helped Margaret a lot because Margaret was so unfamiliar with taking care of children. Once in a while Fannie sees Celia. When the youngsters got married they went to all of the weddings. They lost a boy in the Vietnam War. The husband did a lot of repair work for Margaret while her husband was in the service.
Fannie thinks there is too much stress on differences in color and religion.

45-47 minutes | 590-640 counter

"Sometimes when I read the paper at night I think, "Oh golly, what's ahead [redacted] for the young people?"

Fannie never had children. Margaret is the only one of the daughters who had children, just the one boy. Her boy went to the University of California — the first one in the family to go to college. He's doing computer work.
Youngest brother had three daughters.

Fannie didn't have children because she couldn't. Decided to do what they could for their neices and nephews.

Discussion on friends who adopted.

End of Interview

Fannie Kennedy
West Oakland resident